United Nations

Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Sadruddin Aga Khan tells press conference in Geneva that Iraqi Government has agreed to extend April accords on United Nations humanitarian operation; calls for "maximum restraint" to allow negotiations towards political solution.

- Secretary-General, on official visit to Spain, holds talks with Spanish Prime Minister on variety of issues.

- United Nations expert team concludes discussions with Iraqi authorities on destruction of chemical weapons.

- Social Committee is told of "horrifying" human rights violations in Yugoslavia; is also told that United Nations must take up "massacre of innocent civilians" by Indonesian forces in East Timor.

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The Secretary-General's Executive Delegate for Humanitarian Assistance to Iraq, Sadruddin Aga Khan, told a press conference today in Geneva that an agreement had been reached with the Iraqi Government to extend until 30 June 1992, the Memorandum of Understanding providing for United Nations humanitarian operation in that country, which was signed by Iraq on 18 April.

The Executive Delegate was briefing the press on meetings held last week in Baghdad with Iraqi Ministers on the future of the United Nations humanitarian activities in Iraq.

He said certain clarifications had been introduced in the new agreement with regard to the effective implementation of the humanitarian programme's objective and the return of the majority of displaced persons from the neighbouring countries.

Referring to recent events in northern Iraq, Sadruddin Aga Khan called for "maximum restraint", so that negotiations towards a political solution could move forward without further armed conflict, and the displaced population be permitted to return to their homes at the earliest opportunity.

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The deployment of the United Nations Guards Contingent in Iraq, he said, had provided invaluable support to the humanitarian operation as a stabilizing element in a difficult situation. Calling the Guards "innovative and enterprising", he urged that they be maintained in the interest of the humanitarian programme as well as the Iraqi population. Agreement has been reached with the Iraqis for the continued assignment of the Guards Contingent.

On the question of Iraqi petroleum production and export, Sadruddin Aga Khan said that despite Security Council resolutions allowing oil sales to the amount of 1.6 billion to fund humanitarian imports, no export of oil had yet taken place. He called on all concerned to find realistic means for the resumption of exports of Iraqi petroleum. If the impasse persisted "the ultimate losers will be the Iraqi people", he said.

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Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar met yesterday with the Prime Minister of Spain, Felipe Gonzalez, in Madrid, with whom he discussed a variety of issues dealing with the situation in Yugoslavia, the Middle East, Western Sahara, and Central America, in particular El Salvador.

On Saturday, 23 November, the Secretary-General addressed the Conference of Pontifical Council in Rome on the subject of international efforts against drug abuse. He said the United Nations International Drug Control Programme had received a new mandate by the General Assembly which was both ambitious and realistic. This new Mandate should serve as reference point in the conduct of concerted international efforts against the drug menace, he said.

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A United Nations chemical weapons team has concluded a week of detailed discussions with its Iraqi counterparts to refine plans for the destruction of Iraq's chemical weapons capability.

While in Iraq, the team reviewed an Iraqi proposal for a mustard agent incinerator and concluded that modifications would be required. Similarly, the two sides agreed on a pilot programme to test a process for eliminating nerve agents by caustic hydrolysis. The United Nations experts discussed modifications to the pilot plant, which could eventually lead to a full-scale facility at the Muthanna site. Those modifications were accepted, paving the way for agreement on procedures for getting a United Nations approved pilot programme under way.

The United Nations is considering other possible approaches to the destruction of mustard and nerve agents, including ones with less significant Iraqi involvement. A final decision would be made after all factors, particularly safety, have been assessed.

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The representative of Hungary, Gyula K. Szelei, said this morning that the grave, flagrant and systematic rights violations, which he said were being committed on a "horrifying scale" in Yugoslavia, could not be ignored by the United Nations. He called on the Organization to establish a mechanism to monitor that situation with a view to promoting respect for rights.

Speaking in the General Assembly's Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) debate on human rights questions and situations, Mr. Szelei said a multilateral approach to common problems, including violations of universally recognized human rights, would be most effective.

In the case of Yugoslavia, Mr. Szelei said the right to self-determination, as stipulated in numerous international instruments, had been impaired, adding that the right to life was being violated. He said the exercise of free assembly was met by indiscriminate force and the rights of minorities, including one-half million Hungarians living in Yugoslavia, were being violated.

Meanwhile, other human rights violations including the November 12 "massacre of innocent civilians" by Indonesian security forces in East Timor, have also been brought before the Committee. The representative of Cape Verde, Jose Luis Jesus, said his Government condemned the East Timor incident, in which more than one hundred civilians had been killed or wounded, and called it "another painful episode in the uncertain predicament in which the East Timorese people found themselves".

In a related development, Cape Verde, Angola, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique and Sao Tome and Principe have requested the Secretary-General, in a letter dated 20 November, to renew his efforts towards finding a peaceful solution to the conflict in East Timor. They also called for an inquiry into the facts by the Human Rights Commission.

The five countries stated that East Timor is a question of decolonization and emphasized the United Nations responsibility in the creation of "conditions and mechanisms" to ensure the free exercise of the right to self-determination and independence by the people of East Timor.

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